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# Global flows or rural-urban connections? Temporality, public spaces and heterotopias in globalising Mumbai

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## Abstract\*

Opposing certain dominant perspectives within urban studies, which give prominence to the role of capital in determining social space and urban social processes, there has been an emerging trend among scholars to develop Foucault's idea of heterotopia. This idea has been appropriated to explain spaces that have several levels or tiers of significance, meaning and relationships to other physical places and social spaces. This paper draws upon studies of and fieldwork from the Indian urban context and its evolution, linking these to larger processes of democratisation, social conflicts, and emancipatory struggles. It employs the idea of heterotopia to denote greater agency to class and non-class actors, groups and institutions, in the definition of urban visions and in the determination of urban spatial processes and spatially linked social processes. Various agentive groups and individual actors use the city and develop it for different social, political and economic purposes. For each of them, the city is an event that occurs (or is made to occur) in the specific evolutionary trajectory of their struggles for mobility and social emancipation, or possibly in their rise to dominance. Based on field research in the Indian city of Mumbai, this paper outlines the ways in which the study of this temporal dimension can provide key insights into the spatial, cultural, political and social implications of globalisation in Asian cities. At the same time, it further addresses rural-urban connections, networks and how these interact and intersect with global flows. To this effect, it maps the politics of rural-urban transitions and traces how they in turn give shape to the social agency of marginalised groups and classes in ways that are expressed in these groups' uses of public space.

\* Eine Zusammenfassung in deutscher Sprache findet sich am Ende des Textes.

**Key Words** Heterotopia, Mumbai, global flows, rural-urban networks, public space

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Some of Asia's large cities such as Bombay/Mumbai, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur are undergoing radical and far-reaching changes as a result of increasing influx of global capital, the resultant changes in work, organisation of work and the nature of workplaces and the large scale adoption of global styles of consumption and lifestyle. Some of these changes have been ongoing for decades, while others are of more recent origin related to particular economic events such as economic liberalisation in India, or the East Asian Economic Crisis affecting Thailand and Malaysia among others.

Influential scholars such as Saskia Sassen, David Harvey and Manuel Castells have mapped the spatial reconfigurations of global economic inte-

<sup>1</sup> This is a revised and expanded version of a paper presented at the 5th Great Asian Streets Symposium, National University of Singapore, 5-7 December 2008, Singapore. Ideas and sections from two other seminars are also incorporated in this paper. These include: »The City as Event: Cityhood, Agency, and Heterotopias«, 22 April 2009, presented at South Asian Studies Programme, National University of Singapore; and »Rethinking Urban Informality: Global Flows and the Time-Spaces of Religion and Politics«, 5 May 2009, presented at Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. A related paper that included insights from fieldwork in Bangkok and Singapore was presented as »Translocal Urbanism and the Performance of Religion: Faith, Ritual, and Labour in Mumbai, Singapore, and Bangkok«, at the Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, on 16 April 2013. Comments and suggestions by participants in these seminars are gratefully acknowledged, as are the comments of reviewers for this paper – Dr. Parthasarathi Mondal and Dr. Reza Masoudi Nejad.

gration and rapid flows of capital, technology, information and goods across various countries and regions. However, their studies have focused on cities in the developed north, rather than in the south. Drawing upon modified versions of Marxist, neo-Marxist and post-modernist theories, these and other scholars have offered significant insights into global cities, their role in economic globalisation and the reciprocal impacts on urban processes. With the exception of Harvey and Castells, most of these studies have focused on spatial impacts to the relative neglect of the temporal dimension of these changes and their implications for spatial reorganisation. Even in cases where the temporal dimension has been studied, as scholars like M.P. Smith have pointed out, the overall objective of their studies has been to 'refocus analytical attention from time and history to space and geography' (Smith, 2001: 43). Discussions of processes such as 'time-space compression' by Harvey and others mostly focus on negative consequences for individuals and society, while any analyses of the processes in and of themselves are largely restricted to addressing the drive to accelerate capital turnover time. As such, these scholars predominantly conceptualise time in linear terms. However, temporal changes in the short-term horizon, emergent modalities of time management and cyclical notions of time all have spatial implications. Specific conceptualisations, uses and organisation of time change with respect to global and local reallocation of capital and space. These latter processes need to be better understood in order to gain insights into the actual processes of globalisation in Asian cities. As this paper strives to show, global flows of capital and resultant economic transformations can create new opportunities for people living at the margins, especially through an expansion of time-space in cities in the global south. Adopting a more disaggregated approach, one can also analyse the empowering or emancipatory implications as well as more negative consequences of new time-spaces for groups hitherto marginalised - women, children, the elderly, or minority ethnic groups.

A key objective of this paper is to work out how processes of globalisation intersect with locally contingent processes of social transformation and urbanisation to change peoples' relation to time and space, as well as the implications of these for spatial restructuring and land use in Mumbai. In doing so, the focus is on themes relating to: a) the dynamics of the informal sector in responding to new time-space opportunities opened up by globalisation; b) globally influenced 'bourgeois' ideas of aesthetics, city planning, zoning and environmentalism; and c) cultural, religious and political events engendered in the increasing democratisation of social relations, political mobilisation and economic opportunity, leading to emergent 'urban'

forms of aspirations. Rural-urban as well as time-space flows and connections are seen to be embedded in and to constitute urban processes in each of these cases.

Existing studies on globalisation and their impact on cities in developed economies have outlined the spatial implications of shifts in capital flows and sketched the emergence of global cities such as London, Tokyo, and New York. Correspondingly, they have delineated the ways in which work is being restructured and reorganised in line with the dominance of financial and service sectors and the decline of manufacturing. For instance, Saskia Sassen's work on global cities (1991) essentially deals with the spatial and geographic implications of a city's role in the process of globalisation. Significant as these contributions are, the relevance of the theoretical frameworks they have developed and the insights that these frameworks offer for understanding the spatial implications of globalisation can be questioned in the case of Asian cities. Even as global consumption styles, planning models and changing lifestyles superficially remodel Asian cities in the image of western cities, key underlying factors complicate the evolution of these cities, their labour force, their workplaces, transportation and spatial organisation. These factors include continuing rural-urban linkages, a large labour force dominated by informal sector workers with persistent rural roots and dependencies, the influence of native/national capital and class struggles. The latter are manifest in conflicts between sections of capital, the middle/professional class and the working classes, especially around space and the built environment. The much higher levels of unemployment and underemployment in many cities in developing countries, and the implications of this for labour market dynamics and for the informal sector, is another important aspect to be factored in. The critique of informality, flows and transnational urbanism within urban studies point to the emergence of similar conditions to the cities of the global north as well, be they London, New York or Los Angeles, or even new global financial centres such as Singapore.

Postmodernist and Marxist sociologists and geographers from around the world have tended to neglect the continuing significance of a large rural economy for political struggles, social conflicts and cultural contestations in cities, notwithstanding urban planning tussles. During the 1960s and 1970s, scholars working in Asia and Latin America have been aware of these issues (T.G. McGee on S.E. Asia, Robert Redfield on India, and Bryan Roberts on Latin America to name just three). However, a combined rural-urban political economy framework seems to have gone out of fashion for much of the subsequent period.

One relatively neglected issue in urban studies in India has been the centrality of the politics of

domination and resistance especially in caste conflicts that affect urban processes and spatial practices. Another issue that has received comparatively little attention is class politics, which revolves around middle class ideologies and world-views influenced by global mediascapes. Cities play a crucial political role for diverse sorts of social groups and forms of collective organisation, often based around class, ethnic, caste, religious, regional or ideological forms of identification and including a range of explicitly political groups and factions. Despite the quite significant role that cities have played in India's nationalist movement and post-colonial emancipatory struggles, the political role of cities and its reciprocal impact on urban structures and spatial practices have rarely been studied in any great depth<sup>2</sup>. Historians have been somewhat better in this regard, while sociologists and geographers have tended to jump directly to global issues in studying cities. By doing so, they tend to ignore crucial local power dynamics, as manifest in spatially inscribed relations and practices of domination and resistance. For groups seeking to sustain or extend their dominant status in society, the city is an event, or is made to be an event that supports them in that process. Similarly, for the oppressed and the marginalised the city can be an event that influences the success of their emancipatory struggles or struggles to resist domination. For instance, rural groups seek to use the city in their search for mobility and power struggles.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, other groups that already having a stake in the city may also seek to realise their visions of the city by wielding greater political control over urban planning and governance. This may be achieved by exercising greater control over the resource base in rural areas which constitute the resource catchment for cities. As such, local populations tend to get excluded from access to resources such as forests and water.<sup>4</sup> The contestations, conflicts and struggles between these groups create heterotopic spaces and compete with capital flows in defining and re-defining urban forms and processes.

My argument applies especially in the case of provincial cities, but also in the capital cities of states in India and increasingly in metropolitan cities such as Bombay/Mumbai<sup>5</sup>. These Indian cities are being drawn into the kinds of social and political

struggles discussed above. This is happening because acquiring city-hood enables access to cities, meaning the city becomes a stake in these struggles. Furthermore, I want to outline two ways in which we can conceptualise agency and the city in the cases I have outlined. First, the city provides agency to a range of social actors, primarily by providing access to resources, power and institutions in the city. In the latter case, despite the prevalence of corruption, judicial and bureaucratic institutional arrangements work in less arbitrary ways. In addition, the city provides access to political parties and leaders willing to take up the causes of social actors. The city enables networking and the associated scaling up of smaller social and political movements. The city also provides access to the media and enables greater political visibility, as I will illustrate a little later.

The dominant castes in the rural areas face a crumbling rural economy and increasing difficulties in extracting surplus using feudal forms exploitation. Consequently, the control of the city, access to wider political power and administrative mechanisms of government are important to fund or subsidise new economic activities both in rural areas and in cities<sup>6</sup>. For the *dalits*<sup>7</sup>, the lower castes and the rural poor in general, the city is both a place which offers an alternate livelihood and a space where they can realise their utopias. Thus, it is a place where they hope to lose their identities in the anonymity of the crowd and where they hope that achievement will be valued more than ascription, but above all it generates spaces of justice and empowerment, where they can conceive of or deploy a politics of resistance using a combination of mainstream and alternative political strategies.

The second aspect of agency I deem important is that the city itself takes on agency: it becomes an agent of change, transformation and even revolution. This has been reflected upon in the works of Lefebvre, for instance, who writes on the need to 'urbanise the revolution'. Curiously, post-modernist scholars and some Marxists attempt to downplay the role of cities in history-making. Rather, they seek to underemphasise or even debunk history and temporality in their diverse and quite distinct attempts to consolidate space in their respective political philosophies and analytical frameworks.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The late historian Rajnarayan Chandavarkar did make some attempts to rectify this gap, before his untimely death. See Chandavarkar, 2009

<sup>3</sup> See Parthasarathy, 1997, for an account of the urban violence consequences of this process in Vijayawada, India.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed study of this focusing on Mumbai and its hinterland, see Louw and Mondal, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Bombay is the colonial name, while Mumbai is its current official name. Different classes, ethnic groups and generations refer to the city in different ways. In the rest of the paper, 'Mumbai' will be used.

<sup>6</sup> This is the subject of a separate paper, and is not taken up for discussion here.

<sup>7</sup> *Dalits* (literally broken or oppressed people) are the untouchable castes who are outside the four-fold varna system of the Hindu caste hierarchy. Lower castes may include these, but generally refer to *shudra* castes who were traditionally involved in agricultural and artisanal occupations, work which required the investment of physical labour.

<sup>8</sup> In the case of India, the work of the Marxist geographer Swapna Banerjee-Guha emphasises the subjection of cities, regions and geographical territories and their populations

A key issue that has been overlooked by scholars such as David Harvey (1981), in their analyses of the role of global capital shifts in spatial restructuring, is that capital switches also result in voluntary and involuntary reallocation of labour with significant implications for space and territory. The Asian Economic Crisis in 1997 and the decline of manufacturing in Indian cities made sections of the labour force redundant. These were then forced to take up new livelihoods in the informal sector – especially street vending and hawking (Bhowmick 2005). Significant sections of the workforce also migrated back to their villages, as studies in India and Thailand show.

In my ongoing research I try to work with a combined notion of time-space, as well as with different notions of temporality in understanding spatial practices from below. This includes a notion of time with reference to the making of history, an admittedly modernist notion of history that focuses on how social classes intervene in the progressive march of history.<sup>9</sup> An exclusive focus on space and how capital articulates and manages/governs/transforms space in cities tends to result in a capital-centric approach to urban processes and practices, to the neglect of subaltern urbanisms and class based approaches to urbanism. Rural-urban flows and their implications for urban growth and development are not simply about capital flows, but have broader implications for political economy. These relate to both the city's expropriation of rural populations and resources, as well as larger struggles around democracy, ethnic conflict, ethnic competition and class formation of the rural-urban precariat. Post-modernist and post-structuralist approaches do not differ much from Marxist approaches in the fetishisation of urban space. It is no coincidence that Foucault also dismisses themes of development, along with time and history, as one of 'the great haunting obsession of the nineteenth century', a perspective unlikely to be held by poor migrants to the city seeking emancipation. A recent volume on heterotopias and the city by De Cauter and Dehaene specifically locates heterotopias outside the political process, denies them a central political function, or begrudgingly offer only a proto- or infra-political role to such spaces. Foucault proceeds to identify the present epoch as the epoch of space, and by implication not the epoch of time or history; 'the anxiety of today fundamentally concerns space, no doubt much more than time' he comments (Foucault and Miskovic 1986: 23), neglecting that utopian visions

determine operations in real physical and temporal space. He uses the word 'emplacement' when locating spaces within a network or grid of social relations. However, both he and others employing this term ignore the broader context of cities, including connections between cities and between cities and villages. For Foucault, urban and rural places constitute 'a hierarchic ensemble of places' (ibid.: 22). As such, he subscribes to something akin to a transnational urbanism perspective. However, when he states that 'we are in an epoch in which space is given to us in the form of relations between emplacements', it is an approach that needs to be extended to understand heterotopias in a larger regional or national context. The appropriate way in which this can be done is by linking utopias, which according to Foucault are 'unreal' spaces, with heterotopias and normal, ordinary spaces, both of which are 'real'. I find two aspects of this position problematic. First, I do not think utopias are unreal; several spaces exist which are identified as heterotopias in recent works but which are realised utopias - malls, theme parks and gated enclaves to name a few. Second, between utopian unreal places and real places, there also exist places which can be used as spaces for struggles to achieve utopias, which make the realisation of utopias possible. I argue that this is the way cities are seen by lower caste and poor migrants to the city.<sup>10</sup> This is central to my conceptualisation of heterotopias as spaces between normal and utopian spaces, as spaces which occupy a specific role in the visions of social classes involved in emancipatory struggles. In one of the few places where Foucault links heterotopias to time he mentions transitory spaces that are 'futile' (fairgrounds); but festivals and fairs are also spaces of conflict and negotiation. Moreover, what of political and religious events that are transitory but are related to movements for emancipation and empowerment? In this respect, I clearly depart from the Foucauldian conceptualisation of the temporality of heterotopias.

Celebrated urban scholars such as Soja (1995, 1996) and Lefebvre appear unwilling to cede to heterotopias a status anything other than as places of 'clandestine or underground side of social life' (Lefebvre, 1974), largely disregarding overt political activities that take place in urban spaces. I think this is essentially because of the kinds of urban crisis that western scholars are preoccupied with. For instance, Foucault's idea of heterotopias of crisis reveals a demographic understanding related to the life course of individuals: death, illness, education and socialisation, marriage, old age and so on. But there can also be crises of classes and groups: crises of losing domination, the fear or fact

to global capital, while neglecting the urban contribution to historical and political processes domestically.

<sup>9</sup> As I show towards the end of this paper, a belief in progress need not necessarily be matched with a linear notion of time; multiplicities of space and temporality can also be part of emancipatory struggles or movements of resistance.

<sup>10</sup> For an excellent treatment of Mumbai as a mega-city for the country's poor, see Patel, 2007.



of being dominated; or crises of poverty, discrimination and power deficits. The spaces that result from these crises or struggles are also heterotopic spaces. These are the focus on my research and are central to my approach to and conceptualisation of cities. As such, I am concerned by ›spaces of representation‹ (Lefebvre 1974) beyond how they leave traces in the built environment. These traces cannot be treated as mere leftovers. Such a view can be challenged especially in cities such as where there is persistent domination by rural elites, when monuments get built or when spaces are permanently marked for protest and for rallies. The study of the temporary, sporadic, long-term or permanent use and constitution of public space in cities is fundamental to an alternative understanding of heterotopias from the point of view of power struggles in society in which the city is at once an agent, a stake and a site for such struggles. Studying public space from this perspective also counters pessimistic views of the city in recent debates on privatisation of space, where phrases such as ›the end of public space‹, ›the lament of public space‹ and ›requiem for the city‹ are frequently bandied about (Dehaene and De Cauter 2008). My own field work in Mumbai and Bangkok (during 2007-09 and 2012-13 respectively), which has focused on the political and religious use of public space, offers a more optimistic view. This view points to an augmenting belief in the city and its potential to alter the life chances of certain individuals and groups. Nevertheless, I do not subscribe to excessively optimistic postmodernist perspectives, such as those by Soja, which ›regard these spaces of otherness as alternative urban formations characterised by their inclusiveness, something that renders them as sites of political and social relevance for the empowerment of minority groups and marginal subgroups through the use of space‹.<sup>11</sup> I deprecate the tendency to consider the ›other‹ as an agent consistently capable of radical transformation. I disagree with Soja that ›heterotopias are meant to detonate, to deconstruct, not to be poured back comfortably in the old containers‹ (Soja 1996: 76). Rather, dominant caste control of the city is precisely meant to pour back social spaces into old containers. Dominant caste or class determination of spatial practices, far from empowering minority groups, may generate spaces from which violence emerges. These spaces can be threatening and inspire fear.<sup>12</sup>

Hence, rather than seeing heterotopias as spaces in a ›post civil society‹ as a strategy to reclaim places of otherness, I am more interested in

the struggles to create a civil society, including perhaps a struggle *for* market forces. In contrast with the kind of analysis that implies or takes as its starting point an ›end of politics‹, I suggest that it is both imperative that we identify and analyse the ›multiplicity of public spheres that are public only for the social groups that produce them‹ (Cenzatti 2008: 76) and that we consider two further related issues. First, we need to understand how the specific public spheres and the spaces attached to them impact on other groups. Second, we need to develop ways of knowing how other excluded or marginalised groups attempt to gatecrash these publics and establish themselves within public consciousness. This is one of the issues addressed in this paper. This demands a conceptualisation of the alternate and particularist visions of the city held by diverse social groupings as a multiplicity. These diverse groupings attempt to realise these ideas or visions through political action and activities in the public sphere.

Based on the above discussion, through a sociological study of Mumbai, this paper outlines the ways in which the study of the temporal dimension I have outlined can provide key insights on the spatial, cultural, political and social implications of globalisation in Asian cities. At the same time, it engages with and points to significant rural-urban connections, networks and flows. As such, the politics of rural-urban transitions and how rural-urban flows interact and intersect with global flows is placed at the heart of the question of how the social agency of marginalised groups and classes is given shape in ways that are reflected and expressed in the uses of public space. This prompts several key research issues and questions. In the face of the persistence and strengthening urban-rural networks, how and to what extent do they transform the city, its institutions, associations, culture and built environment? Moreover, to what extent do existing predominant urban features and characteristics subsume these networks? Given the different forms and temporalities of rural-urban transitions does this demand a reconceptualisation in terms of processes of urban colonisation by rural or provincial elites? Could we extend this even further to the rural poor? Finally, what emergent cultural and epistemological imaginaries of cities, regions and nations can we identify in the face of persisting rural-urban linkages?

### **Researching time-space and flows in the city: methodological issues**

My research has unfolded in the context of contradictory impulses in Indian metropolises arising out of economic liberalisation. Cities provide the sites of rising incomes and middle class expansion. Meanwhile, there is increasing social and economic marginalisation, while conflicts over access to urban space and amenities are on the rise. Urban

<sup>11</sup> Sohn, 2008, paraphrasing Soja's views.

<sup>12</sup> For a study of spaces of violence and fear with reference to Muslim minorities in India, see Robinson, 2005. For a treatment with reference to caste conflicts, see Parthasarathy, 1997.

planning and restructuring in major Indian cities like Mumbai has involved reconfiguration of land use patterns and urban space, as well as the upgrading of transportation infrastructure. The specific manner in which this has been carried out has significant impacts on the urban poor and the working classes in terms of displacement, forced evictions and demolitions of ›illegal‹ structures, which have been used by these populations for housing, work, and for hawking / vending. In many Asian cities, economic restructuring and continuing rural poverty have pushed vast numbers of the poor into the urban informal sector (Bhowmick, 2005). Parallel to these changes, continuous attempts by city elites to alter the material qualities of cities via beautification and modernisation reflect and cater to their own production and consumption needs (Parthasarathy 2003).

Urban restructuring that accompanies structural economic changes is further marginalizing those who have been recently excluded. This is accomplished by denying them space for living, livelihoods and recreation, and by establishing a new wave of brash cultural and socio-spatial sites that by their very nature and appearance thwart and exclude the masses from accessing and using these sites. Studies on gentrification in Mumbai's erstwhile mill areas document the social consequences of the transition from ›mills to malls‹, the exclusivist nature of urbanisation reflected in corporate visions, and new discourses that attempt to transform Mumbai and other Indian cities into Shanghai or Singapore (D'Monte 2006, Roy 2009). Urban elites and planners, despite their great conviction in liberalisation, have faith neither in the dynamism of the labouring underclass nor in the latter's abilities to work out solutions to complex urban problems (Parthasarathy 2004). They are seen as mere hindrances to urban renewal and beautification, cancerous growths to be removed with surgical precision, obstacles to civic good governance and blemishes on a ›naturally‹ beautiful urban landscape. Perhaps the most important issues in many urban struggles in cities of the south today are conflicts related to the production and use of the built environment, the latter functioning as a means of consumption as well as reproduction for both labour and capital.

The historical shifts in land use and the built environment under a regime of economic restructuring constitutes one aspect of the temporal dimension that forms the basis for some of the theoretical positions explored by this paper. Another is the global flow ideas, cultural symbols and capital. A third is rural-urban transitions and resultant population flows into and out of the city. The historical dimension I am trying to capture incorporates two further notions of temporality: a) the use of time with respect to space, on a daily, weekly or monthly basis for commercial, residential or recreational purpo-

ses; and b) a cyclical notion of time reflected in the use of space related to various cyclical (e.g. annual) events, such as religious or secular (including national/official) festivals, commercial, cultural or sports events and periodic political and social movements.

This paper argues that while spatial configurations, restructuring and usage always takes place in time, what is not properly understood are the implications of shifts in the use of time across a range of activities, reflected by changes in a large number of individuals' everyday schedules and routines, as well as through the introduction of new events of a religious, cultural, commercial, political or recreational nature in space. Each of these phenomena has significant impacts on how space is used and organised, and subject to temporary and permanent forms of material intervention. Forces of globalisation combine with indigenous agents to bring about important temporal shifts in the short and the long-term. How these play out in space have important consequences for peoples' lives, livelihoods and well-being. Hence, unsurprisingly, these are often sources of conflicts, which tend to revolve around the location and operation of street vending activities, religious processions, protest movements or noise pollution from celebrations and commemorations. An enhanced understanding of these issues will enable better and more inclusive planning with regard to land use, zoning and environmental regulation.

This paper focuses on a number of key issues with respect to the intersection of global and local forces, the nascent transformation in people's relation to time and resultant implications for spatial restructuring and land use. These include a) actors in the informal sector (especially street vending and hawking) adapting to and making use of new opportunities with respect to time and space in the political economic context I have described; b) new ideas of aesthetics, city planning, zoning and environmentalism which influence decision makers and groups with ability to influence public policies – such ideas derive from the world views of middle class activists and citizens and from the global circulation of images, representations and governance models, but also the functional task of ›preparing‹ cities to aid the efficiency of capital flows; and c) cultural and political struggles, which play out in the context of increasing democratisation, with crucial impacts on the uses of public space over time. In the following pages, I discuss these issues in greater detail by using illustrations and examples from Mumbai. The empirical data for this paper is based on sporadic but prolonged fieldwork carried out in the city over the past two years using research methods such as transect walk, go-along, interviews with key informants and participant observation. My research was carried out in selected residential, commercial and business precincts, focusing especially

on areas with links to the global flow of capital, culture and commodities, but also served and populated by groups with rural-urban linkages. To better research and understand temporality and the city, each case was studied at different points of time both in the short term (different points of time in a day/week) and in the long-term (across seasons, months). During interviews with actors occupying/making use of space at different time periods, issues regarding the relationship between time and use of space were raised and discussed. Participant observation and initial interviews revealed that notions of time with respect to land use for commercial, cultural or political purposes were implicit rather than explicit. The challenge of more in-depth interviews with key informants was to tease out the ways in which time emerges as an intrinsic part of the understanding and use of space especially by the poor and the marginalised.

One methodological problem I experienced relates to the tendency to conflate local levels of analysis with the politics of local life. Such a conflation would lead to the kinds of mistakes committed by some ethnographers. The local may be seen as consisting of autonomous spaces, which may or may not harbour alternative visions and motivations. Alternatively, the local may be understood in terms of local and particularist forms of resistance to modernity, globalisation, capitalism, neoliberalism and so on, as oppositional spaces to global structures of domination. My approach has required foregoing a degree of empirical richness and depth in favour of working into my empirical methodologies a conceptual foregrounding of time-space, in order to capture transient and temporary phenomena (including the permanence of temporariness). The upshot of such an approach is to offer a ›thin‹ description of spatial practices in relation to the politics of global flows and rural-urban networks.

This paper develops a theoretical framework without presenting a great deal of the ethnographic material generated by my fieldwork. This material is discussed in greater depth in a series of other papers arising from the research project. ›Testing‹ the workability of the alternate mode of analysis of urbanism in Mumbai that I am proposing is this paper's primary objective.

### **Globalisation and time-space opportunities in the informal sector**

Street vending has always played a major role in the economies of Asian cities, providing cheap goods and services to various sections of the population. Economic restructuring resulting from the Asian Economic Crisis, decline of manufacturing and increase in the service sector (in Mumbai), have had major impacts on the informal sector (Bhowmick 2005, Yasmeen 2001). A few studies have documented how workers and families affected

by layoffs tend to become street vendors owing to low capital and skill requirements. However, comprehensive and theoretically rich studies are few and far between as pointed out by Bhowmick's extensive survey of the literature on street vendors in Asian cities. A few quantitative enumerations have carried out, as have a few ethnographic studies (e.g. Yasmeen 2000, Coombe 2007, Nirathron 2006), but these studies have refrained from studying the temporal dimension. With reference to informal sector activities, several key areas can be identified wherein time and space are conceptualised and made use of in innovative ways by actors involved in street vending and hawking. I employ a number of cases to illustrate how the global flow of capital may impact cities in the periphery and subject urban processes to its domination. For the poor outside of the formal sector, global flows of capital, culture, commodities and images also create and offer opportunities for livelihoods, albeit of a very basic kind.

### *Serving the outsourced workers*

A major aspect of urban restructuring and the development of new urban spaces in Mumbai has been the emergence of office and work spaces servicing the global economy. Among these are call centres, business process outsourcing (BPO) and spaces for the production of components, spare parts and accessories which serve major multinational firms. Demand sets the location of street vendors and hawkers, as well as the goods and services they offer. But global economic linkages also introduced new work hours and expanded the number of jobs available for new labour force entrants in the call centres, BPOs and software firms, all of which either work at night to cater to clients in different time zones or introduce new work hours different from conventional local work timings. These firms also employ a very large number of young and unmarried workers who may not live with their families. A range of food services and other personal services in locations close to either the offices or the residential enclaves where such workers live. Street vendors often modify their timings to provide services at particular hours when demand peaks. New vendors and hawkers gain economic opportunities as the ›time-space compression‹ at a global level lead to a ›time-space expansion‹ locally. In this sense, an extension in the working hours of staff in firms providing a 24-hour market for select goods and services in specific enclaves results in a corresponding expansion in the time that (public) space can be used to eke out livelihoods.

The rapid growth of a ›private‹ security industry also offers new opportunities for entrepreneurial hawkers in the nighttime. The emergence and growth of gated enclaves, businesses which work in the night, ATMs and a range of sites demanding



higher levels of security and protection has led to a phenomenal increase in the number of night watchmen doing duty. These are mostly recruited from among new migrants to the city. Observation of both residential and commercial areas, and of thoroughfares and avenues where these are located, is accompanied by batches of young men providing tea, food, cigarettes, *pan* and other 'nutritional' services to the security staff. There is also an ethnic/regional aspect here. For reasons related to capability, willingness, labour market segregation and social networks, the security industry (both employers and the staff) is dominated by north Indian migrants. Hawkers and vendors catering to the night watch and ward personnel are also drawn from this group, having been alerted to the opportunity by their kin members.

The emergence of time-specific hawkers and vendors in both older (Santa Cruz Export Processing Zone, set up in the early 1970s) and newer (Godrej and Hiranandani call centres, BPOs and software clusters that emerged in the last five years) globally linked economic enclaves in Mumbai provide clear evidence of the time-specific reconstitution of urban spaces and the intrusion of informal sector agents into spaces that had previously been the domain of formal sector economic activities. Offering goods and services especially in the food sector, these hawkers and vendors start early in the morning just as office workers grab a bite before going to work, or during night shifts. Interviews with hawkers revealed that while some of them were new to the trade, several of them shifted their own work hours from the daytime to nights and early morning for two major reasons. One was the relative freedom with which they could operate unseen by municipal authorities. The second was the higher prices that workers in these sectors were willing to pay. Given the time-space expansion in these instances, the local is not just the other of globalism (Smith 2001: 23-47), contrary to David Harvey. Rather, the local is a site in which class struggle plays out in novel ways, as the retrenched workers and new entrants into the labour market find new and innovative ways to use public space for small-scale entrepreneurship in the informal sector. According to Harvey, post-Fordist production regimes have created 'flexible and accommodative postmodern personality types' (Smith 2001: 31). As a critic of post-modernism, such transformations have adverse psycho-social consequences for Harvey (1989). However, an understanding of the flexible and adaptive informal sector worker may yield an alternative view of ingenious, innovative and opportunistic individuals who could give more educated and privileged entrepreneurs and firms stiff competition if urban governance and planning were more favourable. It is not only capital, which compresses time-space in its search for quicker returns to its investment. Less

skilled, less politically powerful, and less educated workers in the informal sector also perceive and significantly use time to shore up their livelihood strategies.

### *The world in the street*

A 24-hour observation of streets especially in residential and mixed-use neighbourhoods would reveal a variety of uses to which they are put.<sup>13</sup> From paper delivery boys inserting supplements into newspapers and milk vending starting at 4 am, to the variety of food stalls starting from around 5pm, a whole range of activities take place in the streets, along with the movement of vehicles and people. A bewildering array of products catering to a broad range of communities and classes are sold at different times of the day, week, month and year.<sup>14</sup> While at first glance the activities on streets across different time scales seem to merely cater to local demand, a deeper analysis brings out direct and indirect links with forces of globalisation.

In western advanced capitalist societies, despite class differences, basic standards of living are higher. In contrast, cities of the global south contain vast numbers of people who are unable to afford basic amenities in their houses, but there is also a much larger range within the hierarchy of stratified classes that live in cities. This has certain mundane but usually unnoticed consequences for urban economies. The sale of perishables (milk, vegetables) on streets and their purchase throughout the day and night is a reflection of the fact that most households in urban India do not have refrigeration facilities to make purchases on a weekly basis and store groceries. The presence of a large number of very poor daily wage earning households who buy small quantities of goods and groceries on an everyday basis means that formal retail chains and supermarkets cannot adequately service their needs. Hence, a thriving informal sector consisting of small retailers and street vendors emerges to meet this demand. At the same time, the global flow of images, representations, lifestyles, goods and commodities through the media and through vicarious consumption, generates demand for goods and services hitherto not available to the majority of the population.

Inability to afford imported goods has led to the emergence of low cost, low quality variants of such goods and services in the informal manufacturing sector. Vendors and hawkers in the streets then distribute these. While time-space compression may have led to instantaneous flows of consumerist images, as Harvey argues (2008), it is not to

<sup>13</sup> This section is primarily based on a study of the Adi Shankaracharya Marg, a major road in Mumbai during June-July 2008, and June-July 2010.

<sup>14</sup> This was also observed in the Dadar market - a major market in the city, but not used for analysis in this paper.

be assumed that global flows are only from the western countries to the global south. The local consumption of objects of desire such as perfume and toys, mundane utility items such as razors and other household goods, food and clothes imitates and reproduces patterns and objects of consumption from Japan, China and other Asian countries as much as if not more than objects from the west. The availability, production and distribution of imitation brands, pirated goods, counterfeited items and unbranded low cost reproductions of imported products alter with respect to the global flow of images and representations from around the world. The informal sector has both the flexibility to cope with idiosyncratic demand patterns and the capacity to produce imitations of global brands at various prices and qualities to cater to demand for the same kind of product from an array of individuals and groups situated at different levels of the social and class hierarchy. Therefore, the street in Mumbai is neither merely a microcosm of the world, nor a floating jetsam that gets pushed around by the flows of global capital. Rather, it is an entity that reflects in real time the high level of adaptation and adjustment that the informal sector makes in response to global capital and cultural flows. Informal sector activity that responds to cultural flows also tends to support the ›decentering globalisation‹ thesis of scholars like Iwabuchi (2002) who have documented Japanese cultural influence in other Asian societies. The huge popularity of Japanese animation and cartoons in India has spawned a market for related toys and products that cannot be met by domestic or transnational firms. Thus, Chinese as well as Indian informal producers have stepped in to produce cheap imitations and Mumbai's lanes and streets are sites both for the production and distribution of these.<sup>15</sup>

Globalisation does not exhibit a decisive influence over time-space utilisation by actors in the informal sector. Rather, two further broad sets of factors also shape these actors' time-space utilisation. First, temporal factors endogenous to individuals and households influence what kind of good or service is provided, as well as where and when. For instance, women's household duties may free them for vending and hawking at certain hours which has to be matched with product demand in particular places where vending is possible, allowed or permitted. Similarly, individuals holding a job may resort to vending as an additional economic activity after work hours, which imposes restrictions on what and where they can hawk. Thus, in one street – Adi Shankaracharya Marg, a major road which links two highways that connect the city to

the rest of the country and also links high income residential areas, new malls, government housing and slums – numerous individuals can be spotted carrying out small-scale vending activities in the evening after returning from their day jobs. The skills they employ may be traditional or related to their day jobs. Equally, they may reflect a niche demand for products or services (e.g. *pan* shops). Likewise, children can be spotted assisting elder siblings or parents after school on weekdays and during weekends. Thus, time then plays an important role in influencing the skill-set and demographic of the workforce employed in activities on the streets at different points of time.

Second, exogenous factors such as governmental, municipal or environmental regulations may determine the time when vending or hawking is permitted, while local finance availability constrains the kinds of services provided. In order to avoid fines or penalties, vending (especially by unlicensed hawkers) may be carried out at hours when municipal or law and order officials are not on the prowl. In addition, sources of finance affect new labour market entrants' livelihood and labour choices, as does the intertemporal calculations of financiers with respect to livelihood viability. Much of the literature on capital flows focus on the formal sector to the neglect of the informal sector. The informal sector is financed by a variety of sources and financiers have their own criteria for assessing the viability and profitability of businesses. Discussions with financiers and loan beneficiaries from small-scale financiers<sup>16</sup> revealed that risk is covered in two major ways, which guides the purpose for which finance can be used. Taxis and Auto-rickshaws emerged as the assets which are most easily financed – because they could be easily recovered and put to use in the case of non-payment of loans. New migrants without other sources of income could especially benefit from driving taxis and auto-rickshaws in the night when there would be less competition. The fact that these passenger vehicles could be used round the clock and be operated in shifts also meant a higher level of risk sharing and a higher probability of loan repayment and returns to capital investment for their financiers and owners. This has other consequences for urban land use as people living in slums lack parking facilities. Thus, the streets are used to park, clean and wash these vehicles. During the night, long queues of taxis and auto-rickshaws frequently block parts of roads adjacent to slums in Mumbai.

To conclude, the informal sector in Mumbai illustrates the analytical limitations of conceptua-

**15** In effect, there exists a ›street‹ version of Walter Benjamin's dreamworld. For a discussion of this concept with reference to cultural flows emanating from Japan in Asia, see Iwabuchi, 2002, 200-205.

**16** These discussions were carried out in the Park Site, Vikhroli area, a major slum settlement for migrants from north Indian states during July-August 2009, and June-July 2010.

lizing time-space compression solely in terms of maximizing capital efficiency. Hawkers, vendors and small enterprises take advantage of new opportunities. These actors are more attuned to local, temporally specific forms of demand as opposed to rapid turnover. As such, their economic logic of survival is quite distinct from the accumulation approach favoured by big capital. Accumulation for accumulation's sake and production for production's sake does not explain or capture the use of time-space by actors in the informal sector despite their very clear global linkages. Unlike Marxist and neo-Marxist arguments, urbanisation in Mumbai is not merely a solution to a general capitalist crisis of accumulation and surplus production. Rather, urbanisation also occurs due to migration by the rural poor seeking to escape poverty, unemployment and social exploitation. Furthermore, urbanisation and urban economic processes are also due to activities of the urban poor, such as the small entrepreneur or migrants in search of jobs and political/social empowerment/emancipation. For the urban poor, physical space is not just fixed capital; it is also manipulated and retains a certain fluidity in relation to changing policies, demand patterns, finance sources, labour availability and the availability of space across time for different purposes. A focus on petty trade, street vending and hawking has elicited the benefits of an approach that engages with local specificities of labour market and migratory dynamics, financial opportunities, governmental and regulatory procedures and socio-cultural patterns of consumption, employment and so on. In contrast, a globalist approach to urban restructuring purely from the point of view of switches in capital flows obfuscates how labour flows and choices play out in time-space and the spatial consequences of demand flows arising from the gradation of classes in cities like Mumbai.

### **Global Cultural Flows and conflicts over time and space**

Globalisation introduces new ideas of city planning, aesthetics and zoning which capture the minds of middle classes, elites and planners (Drakakis-Smith 1991, Parthasarathy 2003). This both enables and constrains diverse groups of citizens' access to and use of space. For instance, creative use of the term 'public space' may result in the leasing of public land to privately owned clubs, art galleries and gaming parlours. At the same time access to public space is restricted for the urban poor, who cannot partake in sports or other recreational activities on the land that is leased.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, whatever little public space is available

will be taken over for such activities by the urban underclass during certain times of the day, week or month.<sup>18</sup> Globalisation in the form of increased number of tourists may also lead to demands for goods and services provided by vendors at certain points of time (Bhowmick 2005). At the same time tourism also leads to increased demands for beautification and the development of infrastructure and other signifiers of modernization, leading to further displacement of the poor and pressures on space for vendors and hawkers.

### *Environmental ideoscapes and time-space conflicts*

Environmental concerns with ecological, air and noise pollution are manifest in the global flow of ideas that constitute Appadurai's ideoscapes (1996). 'Bourgeois Environmentalism' juxtaposes issues of public space, sanitation and cleanliness, pollution, aesthetics and livelihoods in order to create and maintain an exclusivist social order that further marginalise the urban poor and the disadvantaged.<sup>19</sup> The governmentalisation of these ideas into bodies of law and regulation prevents certain groups' access to certain spaces, displaces the urban poor from their places of work or residence and prohibits certain activities. For instance, noise pollution norms disallow public festivities and commemorations past certain hours in the night in open public spaces, which are usually free or low cost and accessible to the poor. However, entertainment and recreational events for the rich – rock concerts by western music bands, new year bashes, rave parties and so on – are not subject to the same restrictions since these will either take place in enclosed places with sound barriers or in exclusive gated enclaves or private beaches. Indian cities have been the sites of frequent conflicts over the time and location of such events, as well as subsequent legal and judicial disputes. In Mumbai attempts by the judiciary and the administration to enforce noise pollution norms have particularly affected religious events and festivals that traditionally happen during night times.

While such issues are usually discussed in the media in terms of religious or communal divides, as a problem of institutionalizing secularism, the class angle is usually ignored. It is the poor lacking both financial power and access to enclosed spaces who find in the streets social and physical space for cultural expressions. Historically, the urban poor are organically linked to the rural poor and have tended to practice religion in public, since they were usually excluded from temples and other Hindu spaces owing to their caste background. Hence, public space has conventionally provided the sites of lower caste rural religion. Moreover, in

<sup>17</sup> This is discussed in greater detail in Parthasarathy, 2003.

<sup>18</sup> For instance, the use of streets for sporting activities by children and youth during weekends.

<sup>19</sup> Baviskar, 2011

a highly congested city like Mumbai, where there is little access to open spaces for recreation and many existing recreational spaces are gradually becoming enclosed and paid enclaves (e.g. entry fees for parks), religious festivals have become recreational events. Conflicts over noise pollution norms are therefore expressions of class conflict played out over issues of time and space. But class conflict also hides other divisions. Where the poor are mainly migrants from another region, Muslims or lower caste groups, festivals and events peculiar to these groups are more likely to face a ban than those of other privileged groups.

Air, soil and water pollution and sanitation/hygiene norms are leading to strict zoning regulations, which crucially affect commuting time for the working class, as well as indirectly affecting street vendors providing services to the working class. Such struggles have been studied to a greater extent in Delhi where an activist judiciary has designed and implemented insensitive zoning regulations with huge implications for unemployment in the case of those previously employed in small-scale manufacturing.<sup>20</sup> In Mumbai, such regulations have been implemented more discretely but with similar effects. For instance, shifting of ice factories outside the city has meant that fish vendors have had to spend more time travelling and obtaining ice, leaving less time for trading in the streets and fish markets and incurring a greater expense from the longer commute. In addition, there are significant pressures from the middle class and elites to close or shift out fish markets and *tabelas* (informal, small scale dairies producing milk from cows and buffalos), citing environmental and sanitation problems. The dependence of a large section of the population on natural resources (small-scale fishing and dairying, foraging) gives the city a ›rural‹ flavour (Parthasarathy 2011) and offers a glimpse of an alternative imaginary of the city. Notwithstanding the non-availability of scientific data, the preparation of food by vendors (who are usually rural migrants catering to migrant workers and the urban poor) has been banned in the city with hygiene reasons mainly cited. Street food vendors are patronised by all classes, and vendors allege fear of competition by restaurants as the reason for the ban.<sup>21</sup> One effect of the ban on street cooking has been to push cooking activities into houses, alleys and backstreet locations. As such, those favouring a ban have largely overlooked important safety and sanitary implications. Another effect has been a division of labour between those who cook and those who then sell cooked food in the streets.

20 For a discussion see Parthasarathy, 2001.

21 Food continues to be cooked in Mumbai's streets largely in violation of the ban.

### *Religion, culture and the expansion of time-space*

Mumbai is the most cosmopolitan city in India, with over 50 % of the population hailing from other Indian states. Hence, over several decades, groups from other states have gradually introduced public and community celebrations of cultural and religious events and festivals into the city, leading to the reconfiguration of spatial practice during festive seasons. These celebrations have emerged as a significant source of conflict between activists of chauvinist and nativist political parties<sup>22</sup> and ›outsiders‹. Until a decade ago, the major public celebration of the Ganesh festival lasted for ten days during August-September. The festival itself became public during India's nationalist movement as part of efforts to unite Hindus against British rule in the early decades of the 20th century (Cashman, 1970). The Ganesh chaturthi is one of the city's and the country's most popular festivals, celebrating the birth of one of the favourite Hindu gods, Ganesha. Thousands of idols of the god installed on streets and street corners are publicly visible. The festival is comprised of worship and various religious-cultural events during the ten-day period before the idols are immersed in water bodies. Immigration from outside the state gradually introduced the Navratri (celebrated publicly by the Gujaratis as Dandia – public song and dance events, and by the Bengalis as Durga Puja), which usually occurs in October. The extensive use of public space – streets and lanes are completely blocked for extended periods during these festivals – brought with it several consequences aside from inconvenience to road users. The use of public space rapidly became a prime site of contestation among diverse social and political groupings. Members of diverse political parties, local factions, youth groups, castes and religions curated and celebrated festivals and other events. These included regionally specific cultural/religious festivals,<sup>23</sup> as well as celebrations of the birthdays of political leaders.

Existing studies on the Ganesh festival usually link it to Hindu cultural or right wing mobilisation (Kaur 2003), but a closer examination of festival spaces reveals overt and covert political uses not necessarily related to religion. There is a caste dimension, as *dalits* have for long been excluded

22 Recent conflicts between supporters of a nativist party – the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) – and migrants into the city from north India have been widely covered in the press. The MNS is an offshoot of the Shiv Sena whose aggression and violence towards ›outsiders‹ – migrants from other parts of India, but particularly from north India – has been well documented. For an analysis of Shiv Sena politics rooted in Mumbai's urbanization process, see Patel, 1996.

23 Such as the Chaat puja celebrated by Biharis in October-November.



from these festivities.<sup>24</sup> In the last couple of decades however, with increasing political power and social mobility, *dalits* are setting up their own *pandals*.<sup>25</sup> For instance, the well-known gangster Chota Rajan's opportunistic dalliance with Hindutva forces and his well-publicised massive installations for the Ganesh festival originated in the need to project his opposition to upper caste domination. The popularity of the God Ganesha among the masses also means that all political parties have to have a *pandal* in every locality as a strategy of mobilisation, but also to be in touch with their supporters. Local municipal corporators and legislators support a number of visibly and accessibly public activities during the ten day festivity as a means of keeping their core political supporters active and retaining a visible political presence. In some areas it was also observed that aspiring politicians set up their installations during religious festivals as a way to publicise themselves, but also to display their strength to higher-level political leaders of different parties. Political parties seeking to enter the political landscape of the city – such as the largely *dalit* supported Bahujan Samaj party from north India – also make use of festival spaces and compete with other parties in using such spaces for the political mobilisation of north Indian lower caste migrants. Thus, festivals are also important public, political events that link the city's residents, including its migrants, to other political spaces of the state and nation.

Tamil women cooking pongal in copper and earthen pots on the streets of Dharavi (a large slum agglomeration) perceive their public celebration as an affirmation of their peasant origins in the city. The celebration of Gudi Padva (Marathi new year) or Navaratri by Marathi speaking lower castes in slums is redolent of spring celebrations in agrarian environments. This is even more evident in the Chhat puja, originally a rural festival from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, which has become popular over the last few years in Mumbai. Conventionally practiced in an isolated way by individuals and families, it has now become a community event occupying large spaces in and around Mumbai's Juhu beach, despite the impurity of the sea as opposed to the ritual purity of the river for Hindus. The scale of the celebration and the public patronage and support for the Chhat puja by Mumbai politicians of north Indian origin leaves little doubt that the sudden popularity and public observance is calculated to counter the very public

violence against north Indians in Mumbai by activists of nativist political parties. In this case, the politics of rural-urban networks and flows takes on further significance in the modification of communal uses of public space. But peasant religion in Mumbai is not just about what happens in the city. It is also about the absences, the reverse flows to the villages to celebrate Holi, the Chhat puja or the Ganpati festival. It is truly translocal. Mill workers who have for long celebrated the Ganpati festival introduced its modes of celebration into Mumbai from their villages. There is nothing very urban or political about the Ganpati festival, especially if you look at the hundreds of neighbourhood and family celebrations which are not linked to the larger politically affiliated pandals. The public expansion of the Chhat puja may be political, but it is also a reflection of democratisation, in the sense that there is much greater scope to perform rituals that have not been practiced in the past. Thus, as the political and economic capacity of these actors has expanded, rural festivities are transposed to a cosmopolitan modern environment. There is no feeling of being ashamed of one's origins as pride in one's rural origins and cultural background takes on new meaning.

In addition, global linkages are being formed around these festivals. Increasingly, multinational companies and Indian public and private firms are sponsoring such events and using them to advertise their products and services. The support of and legitimisation by the state, political elites and the corporate sector of seasonal and cyclical uses of space has thus emerged as common practice over the last decade in Mumbai. Intriguingly, civil society organisations, NGO, and corporate spokespersons both condemn and speak out against illegal occupation of urban space, while they simultaneously collaborate in this practice through sponsorship of these cultural events. While these occupations only last for short periods, the consequences are long-term. Spaces get marked out by certain political/religious groups and are occupied for construction/erection weeks before the actual festival. Meanwhile, associated smaller events drag on for days after the festival. Religious symbols that temporarily get erected gradually become permanent, while spaces get recognised locally as marked for certain purposes. This may result in alienation and the inculcation of fear as other groups pass through them. This accretionary conversion of space over time, and the collusion of various social and economic actors in this process, needs to be better understood in order to explain social/ethnic conflicts within the city. As individuals and households linked by caste, religion, regional origin, language or ideology use political strategies and support political parties in their struggles for social mobility and empowerment, the cultural movements and struggles that emer-

24 For a paper on dalit politics and emancipation in Mumbai, see Rodrigues, 2003

25 A *pandal* is a temporary fabricated structure used for festivals, weddings, or other public celebrations. Here it refers to the temporary structures with an idol of the god Ganesha that are erected throughout the city by neighbourhood associations.



ge also translate into political conflicts, which express themselves in conflicts in and about space. Political and religious imbrications are linked to rural-urban flows, transitions and networks, to the caste and regional conflicts implicated in these transitions and connections. They are neither simply a product of capital flows, nor are they merely the consequences of government action or inaction on urban and spatial planning.

### **The spatio-temporal implications of cultural/political struggles**

The use of public spaces, including roads, streets, parks and playgrounds for cultural or political events has been on the rise in Mumbai. The built environment is restructured and recaptured by city elites, the corporate sector, ethnic groups and other interested actors. Old structures may vanish to be replaced by structures – permanent and temporary – that relate to an earlier or invented history. Places of worship may proliferate, as may temporary structures during festivals, and the areas these inhabit soon become *marked* for specific occasions and specific groups. Street symbols change, with boards, banners and hoardings containing messages and images which signify specific accounts of history or attempt to manufacture allegiance to a specific social group revolving around ethnic-based claims. Trade union offices are replaced with offices of political parties or local cultural/youth associations affiliated to specific cultural-political forces. Streets and localities transmogrify, as it were, unlocking novel visions of the future that link to specific ›dredged‹ versions or inventions of the past. The notion of cyclical time becomes important here as annual events related to religious festivals, political events and commemorations of past (dead) political leaders all occupy public space in crucial ways with short and long-term consequences for the built environment. Furthermore, these events evoke variable reactions from the rest of the population who may be put to temporary or long-term inconvenience. In some cases, they may even face threats of violence, hatred or marginalisation.

A major political development that has been emerging for over three decades but that has really come into its own over the last decade is the political empowerment of dalits – the ex-untouchables in the Hindu hierarchy – in Mumbai. This political empowerment is as much an expression of the rise to power of political parties and leaders from among the ranks of the dalits, as an expression of rising incomes among members of this community propelled by a strengthening economy and new labour market opportunities that do not restrict jobs to members of particular castes. The liberalisation of the Indian economy has been the subject of much debate. In contrast with criticism coming from the left, dalit leaders and intellectuals have

responded with cautious to open celebration. These dalit elites see in the opening-up opportunities for those who neither have the social background nor the social networks that formed the basis of the old economy.<sup>26</sup> Dalit leaders and intellectuals have also made use of international networks, United Nations Declarations, the spread of human rights movements and funds available from global denominational and secular agencies to empower themselves in the city. In sum, this has led to an aggressive occupation of public space for events related to celebration of births and deaths of dalit leaders, as well as the commemoration of events that are landmarks in the progress of dalit emancipation. In these events, the mass mobility of dalits from villages and other smaller towns to Mumbai, and their temporary constitution of a dalit political mass, is a significant aspect that links rural and urban areas politically and geographically. The public use of space for political purposes, which was earlier cyclical and linked to elections, has now become seasonal in a similar way to the celebration of religious festivals from which dalits were traditionally excluded. Marxist dismissal of non-class social movements need to be critiqued and rethought in view of such developments, which both make use of global flows of capital and ideas and express local particularities. As much as funds for public events are increasingly accessible to the marginalised segments of society, funds also flow from international agencies and from a global diaspora that financially supports such events. Political leaders with a rural support base also sponsor organisations and events exclusively for members of their rural constituencies who are temporarily in the city, or who are linked through caste and kinship to village voters in their constituencies. The emergence of competitive political and cultural struggles over space also impacts the rise of small businesses. In the Powai area where this emergence was studied, there has been an exponential growth in the number and business of small enterprises catering to the organisation of such events – by providing tents, sound and light equipment, chairs, food, flowers and decoration material. Again, since demand for these goods and services is seasonal, cyclical or sporadic, and ideological/political reasons sometimes prevent service providers from catering to events organised by opponents, such businesses do not follow the logic of capitalist enterprises, but function more as social enterprises which also act as sources of livelihood.

In Mumbai, while *dalit* mobilisation and events were largely organised traditionally by various factions of the Republican party of India, there is now an explosion of *dalit* events coming from other quarters. These have been in part motivated by

26 This debate has been discussed in Parthasarathy, 2005

the entry of the Bahujan Samaj Party with a much larger purse into the city's politics, but also by the emergence of independent *dalit* activists and associations. Funds flowing from international human rights agencies and Christian denominations have also aided *dalit* events in specific areas. The popularity of Ambedkar rivals that of only Shivaji and the god Ganesh. Hence, rival political parties also compete to organise *dalit* events. The celebration of Ambedkar's birth anniversary, marked as a public holiday, is now an important public event in the city. But the event that has really enabled thousands of rural *dalits* to gatecrash into public consciousness is Ambedkar's death anniversary, which falls on 6 December every year. From only a few thousand, the number of *dalits* paying homage at his memorial every year now runs into hundreds of thousands and the city, its roads and public transport are swamped on this day, as are other public spaces taken over for temporary accommodation and boarding. Politicians, perceiving an opportunity to increase their popularity, also support this event by providing support and facilities for the ›pilgrims‹ who visit Mumbai for this occasion. Newspapers staffed by mainly upper caste journalists who for so long ignored this event have now been forced to report, mainly due to the public character of this event which affects most users of roads and public transport.

The key insight that emerges again runs contrary to the arguments of Harvey and other Marxist geographers who interpret cultural and political developments purely through the lens of capitalist logic. Rather, in countries like India where democratic revolutions as well as capitalist economic systems are yet to fully develop or be realised, and where social and emancipatory struggles remain important, such struggles are not only autonomous of the requirements of global capital, but may in fact use and benefit from the consequences of global flows (Smith 2001: 46). Capital is not only not ›omniscient and omnipotent‹ as such scholars have argued, but may actually contribute to class struggles on the side of the working class. Following M. P. Smith, with respect to the spatio-temporal implications of cultural/political struggles, ›social movements are historically particular expressions of actors in real time‹ (Smith 2001: 43). As such, there exists crucial linkages between political/caste struggles and class struggle, while social/political movements also need to be seen as a source of demand for goods and services and hence of capital flows.

### Concluding Comments

I have offered several illustrations of major time-space interactions observed in Mumbai as one of Asia's globalizing cities. This paper is part of a larger project and, as such, a number of other illustrations and cases are not included here, but

constitute a basis for the arguments presented. I have argued that in order to appreciate changes in time-space and linkages with global flows, one must also take into account the specific class, ethnic and political configurations in particular cities, as well as the specific economic trajectory of these cities and the regions/countries in which they are located. My argument, therefore, attends to local specificities in economies at different stages of capitalist development and with different rural-urban demographics, which have substantially different class fractions and class divides. In order to understand the multiple ways in which globalisation and local economic imperatives shape individuals' and communities' relationship to, understanding and use of time, one needs to analyse the modes through which shifts in time use implicate and have consequences for spatial reorganisation and land use. Concurrently, in order to comprehend the arenas in which conflicts and competition for space related to time-use take place, as well as the major reasons for these, it is essential that we critically dissect the role of laws, regulations, and authorities in mitigating, exacerbating or complicating time-space conflicts and competition between groups in cities like Mumbai. Such an exercise will, however, first require a broader and bottom-up understanding of how ordinary people make use of time and space in their quotidian struggles to make a living and for social emancipation and political empowerment. This paper is a beginning and represents part of an approach that Coombe (2000) refers to as understanding the ›local life of global forces‹. It achieves this by focusing on the unique ways in which time is reorganised by forces of globalisation in collaboration with local actors and in consonance with rural-urban transitions. In turn, these forces combine to restructure physical space, the built environment and time use in novel ways.

The analysis above also offers pointers to a different conception of heterotopia, a different conceptualisation of the city itself. The city has much more of the ›rural‹ and the ›regional‹ in it than that with which it is usually credited. In distinguishing between the rural and the urban, scholars like Ashish Nandy (2001) tend to place too much emphasis on the idea of the city as an organised space, on the ›formal‹ aspects of the city, its institutional base, the high level of individualism and anomie and the non-innocence of the city which is seen to be tainted, sullied, corrupted. The foregoing analysis not only brings out the high level of informality which disrupts organisation and formality, but also the various ways in which forms of communitarianism and ethnic togetherness struggle to efface individualism in the city. One also finds that far from the city being the opposite of the village, the city itself is subjected to rural influences. It is ruralised, and the rural in the city does not abjectly

succumb to structural and psychological domination. The rural transforms the city, and far from being an outcome of instrumental rationality the city is not just made by capital and the state, but made and remade by those who migrate there. The rural migrants do not go back defeated to the village, like the cinematic Bengali effeminate heroes whose examples are the basis for Nandy's arguments, but locate themselves simultaneously in the rural and the urban. As such, they make use of global flows and are sometimes buffeted by these, but they still retain a vision of the city as a utopian place, even as the city itself remains a heterotopic space. The city, therefore, contains sites which can be used as spaces for struggles to achieve utopias, social spaces which make the realisation of utopias possible, where despite individualizing and objectifying tendencies it remains possible to generate a critical mass necessary to launch struggles over livelihoods, identity, resistance and emancipation.

These struggles span the rural and the urban, with enhanced urban consumption resulting in increases in the exploitation and expropriation of rural populations and livelihoods. Struggles around mining, the location of infrastructure projects (airports, ports, power plants, highways) and land grab for residential, resort, tourist, and industrial projects primarily affect rural, resource dependent, socially marginalised populations. Moreover, they centre around the consumption needs of the ›omnivores‹, a term coined by Guha and Gadgil to refer to industrialists, rich farmers and the urban middle classes, who adversely impact the ›ecosystem people‹, turning them into ›ecological refugees‹ who storm the cities for survival. On the one hand, the city is the site for expropriators, and the refuge of the expropriated. Thus battles have to be fought simultaneously on several axes to obtain justice for the rural poor and landless labour. On the other hand, persistent agrarian crises, continuous marginalisation from natural resources and enduring social inequalities around caste and tribe push socially and politically disenfranchised groups into cities in the hope of being part of a ›modern‹ emancipatory politics. Cities like Mumbai become the sites of these kinds of struggles, even as they become important nodes in global capital circuits.

Conflicts over religious and ethnic identities, political and emancipatory movements for empowerment and struggles over livelihoods all play out in urban space, but they also question the ›inevitability of a grand narrative‹ regarding the temporalisation of space (Massey 1999, 44). By evoking the ›unnerving multiplicities of space in time (Massey 1992, 67), the stories of conflicts and struggles in Mumbai point to the ›centrality (and integral nature) of time-space‹ in urban social movements and spatialised politics. Finally, it suggests that while an analysis of rural-urban linkages and global flows that emphasises somewhat their linearity (for

example, as an escape from exploitation or oppression) can be useful, we must take care to avoid any commitment to singular, inevitable or predetermined accounts of future outcomes.

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## Zusammenfassung

Entgegen manchen in den Urban Studies weit verbreiteten Perspektiven, die die Rolle des Kapitals bei der Bestimmung des sozialen Raums und urbaner sozialer Prozesse in den Mittelpunkt stellen, wendet sich eine wachsende Anzahl von Forschern Foucaults Begriff der Heterotopie zu. Er dient dazu, Räume zu erklären, die mehrere Bedeutungs- und Sinnebenen aufweisen und in vielfacher Beziehung zu anderen physischen Orten und sozialen Räumen stehen. Das vorliegende Working Paper stützt sich auf Studien zur Entwicklung von städtischem Raum in Indien und setzt diese in Bezug zu größeren Demokratisierungsprozessen, sozialen

Konflikten und Emanzipationsbewegungen. Der Begriff Heterotopie verdeutlicht, dass schicht- und nicht-schichtspezifische Akteure, Gruppen und Institutionen bei der Definition urbaner Visionen sowie bei der Bestimmung urbaner räumlicher Prozesse und der damit verbundenen sozialen Prozesse stärker als Handelnde in Erscheinung treten. Verschiedene Gruppen und einzelne Akteure benutzen und entwickeln die Stadt zu unterschiedlichen sozialen, politischen und ökonomischen Zwecken. Sie betrachten die Stadt als ein Ereignis im spezifischen Verlauf ihrer jeweiligen Kämpfe um Mobilität und gesellschaftliche Emanzipation, fallwei-

se auch ihres Aufstiegs an die Macht. Ausgehend von Feldforschung im indischen Mumbai wird herausgearbeitet, wie die Untersuchung dieser zeitlichen Dimension wichtige Einblicke in die räumlichen, kulturellen, politischen und sozialen Auswirkungen der Globalisierung in den Städten Asiens eröffnen kann. Darüber hinaus werden die Beziehungen und Netzwerke zwischen

dem ländlichen und dem städtischen Raum angesprochen und deren Berührungspunkte und Wechselbeziehungen mit globalen Strömen beschrieben. Dazu wird anhand der Politik des Übergangs vom ruralen zum urbanen Raum aufgezeigt, wie diese Politik das soziale Handeln marginalisierter Gruppen und Schichten und deren Nutzung des öffentlichen Raums prägt.

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